

# Child poverty pervasive in large American cities, new report shows

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Years after the end of the Great Recession, child poverty remains widespread in America's largest cities. A paper just released by the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), a research center based at Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health, reports that nearly three children in five living in Detroit are poor, according to the most recent Census figures. This rate has grown by 10 percentage points since the onset of the Great Recession in 2007.

Most [children](#) in Cleveland and Buffalo also live in poverty, as do nearly half the children in Fresno, Cincinnati, and Memphis. Other large cities topping the list for child poverty are Newark, Miami, St. Louis, and Milwaukee. Seven of the 10 cities with the highest child poverty rates have seen them climb by eight percentage points or more since 2007, led by Fresno, with an extraordinary 16 percentage point jump.

"Many Americans—even policymakers—seem unaware of the shocking prevalence of child poverty in many of our nation's most important and iconic cities," observed Curtis Skinner, PhD, director of Family Economic Security at NCCP. "Reducing child poverty is critical to the social and economic health of cities, now and in the future."

At 30.6 percent, the child [poverty rate](#) for all U.S. large cities (defined as the 71 cities with a total population of 250,000 or higher in 2007) is substantially higher than the 19.9 percent poverty rate for all children in the United States in 2013. While the national child poverty rate fell by two percentage points from 2012 to 2013, the big-city rate declined by

only one percentage point. The aggregate child poverty rate in big cities remains four percentage points higher than the pre-recession rate in 2007 of 26.4 percent.

Many of the 25 cities with the highest child poverty rates are counted among the cities with the fastest increases in child poverty since the recession. However, eight cities with rapid poverty growth, including Las Vegas, Honolulu, and Lincoln, Nebraska, had rates well below the aggregate big-city child poverty rate in 2013. Many factors may contribute to the growth in child poverty in a given city, but some commonalities are evident among the group of cities. Some older industrial cities, including Detroit and Cleveland, suffered a sharp contraction of their manufacturing industries and related job losses in the course of the Great Recession. Other cities, such as Las Vegas and a number of cities in California and Florida, were particularly hard hit by the collapse of local housing markets and contraction of the construction industry.

"Policymakers at all levels of government need to recognize the pandemic of urban [child poverty](#)," said NCCP Director Renée Wilson-Simmons, DrPH. "We have a tool chest of proven anti-poverty policies, but lack the political will to use them. Because children do better when families do better, it's essential that two-generation approaches have a central place in the domestic policy agenda. By combining education and training for parents to enable them to move to jobs that offer a path out of poverty with high-quality early care and education for children, the life opportunities of both can be improved."

Provided by Columbia University's Mailman School of Public Health

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